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THE

LIBERTY

OF

Human Nature,

Discuss'd, Stated, and Limited,

IN A

SERMON.

PREACHED

By J. LAMBE M. A. and Chaplain in Ordinary to his Majesty.

LONDON,

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1 Cor. Chap. VI.

The latter part of the 12th. Verſe.

All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the Power of any. The whole Verſe runs thus. *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient, All things,* &c.

THE Doctrine of Fate, or the neceſſity of Human Actions deſtroys Religion, Society, Reaſon, or the very Being of Rational Nature. For if Man were a meer Machine, moved and acted by irreſiſtible Springs and Weights without himſelf, there could be no ſuch thing as Reaſon or Deliberation, Judgment or Diſcretion, Wiſdom or Folly, Virtue or Vice, Rewards or Puniſhments, which neceſſarily ſuppoſe a Power of

Election, of judging, chuſing and refuſing. No Action of him that moves againſt his Will is his *own*, and therefore is not ſubject to any *Character* or Imputation. Indeed he cannot with any propriety be ſaid to *act* at all, but to be *acted upon*, or to *ſuffer* the Impreſſions of irreſiſtible cauſes. Nor is the opinion of *Neceſſity* more pernicious in its conſequences, than it is abſurd and impoſſible in it ſelf. It is confuted by common Senſe, for we feel a *Vital* Principle within our ſelves, a perfect Liberty of choice, an abſolute Authority over our own Actions; we perceive how readily our Will ſubmits to our Underſtanding, and all our Nerves and Inſtruments of Action, in an inſtant obey the Motions of our Will: and we find our Station is ſuitable to our Powers, in a world of various Contingencies, in the midſt of different Objects, of ſeveral amabilities, for the exerciſe of our Reaſon and Diſcourſe. If this be falſe, it is impoſſible we ſhould be *ſure* that any thing is true; becauſe it is matter of Senſe,

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we perceive and feel it every moment in every Action of our Lives.

But it is not in vain to vindicate the Liberty, which is alſo the Dignity and eſſential Difference of human Nature, whilſt we our ſelves, who cannot but be delighted with this Divine Prerogative in the *Notion* or *Idea*, are yet ſo willing to miſtake, or part with the thing it ſelf; whilſt we who enjoy a perfect freedom in all our capacities of Intellection, Reaſon and Choice, ſhould nevertheleſs, as if we preferr'd Neceſſity, *voluntarily* ſubject our ſelves to Opinions, and irrational Appetites: whilſt we who are apt to aſſert our Liberty with Heat and Zeal where it is not concerned, ſhould patiently decline it in the greateſt and moſt proper Inſtances, where it ought to be exerciſed.

Like the *Corinthian* Chriſtians, whom all the Reaſon in the world, no not the honor of Chriſtianity it ſelf, could diſſwade from impleading one another, before the Heathen Magiſtrates, becauſe, forſooth! the Courts were

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as open to them as to others, and they would
Verſe 1. not be abridg'd of their Liberty; whilſt as St. *Paul* obſerves, theſe very men, that would not ſo much as forbear an indifferent practice, tho but for a ſeaſon, and for the Honor of the Goſpel, and at the inſtance of the *Apoſtle* himſelf, were yet ſo much miſtaken in their Apprehenſions of Liberty, that at the ſame time they were the baſeſt and moſt *contented* ſervile Slaves, to the worſt of *Maſters*, to brutiſh Paſſions and unnatural Deſires.

And in the words of my Text, he confutes their vain Conceit, diſcovers their Folly, and reproves their Petulance and Inequality by this
Verſe 12 univerſal undoubted Rule of Wiſdom, *All things, &c.* The Text then is a Confutation of the falſe and abſurd Reaſonings of the *Corinthian Converts*. And the Caſe was this:

The *Apoſtle* accuſes them of two very heinous Crimes, the one of a litigious Diſpoſition diſhonorable to Religion, and vexatious

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to one another, v. 7. the other of Intemperance, with thoſe laſcivious practices which generally attend it, v. 9. Now the anſwer of the *Corinthians* to the *Apoſtle*'s Accuſation is briefly this, *viz. All things are lawful for us.* The Courts of Juſtice are open to all, nor does any Law of God forbid the defence of our Property by Suits at Law: and the diſtinction of meats is now aboliſh'd, we are now allowed to eat of all, and as for the wanton conſequences of ſuch a Liberty, we are taught that they are neceſſary, and therefore ought not to be charged upon us as a Crime. *Dr.* Ham. in Loc.

And theſe indeed were the looſe and extravagant Doctrines of the place, which they imbib'd by Education: for the *Corinthians* were the greateſt Libertines in the World. Who ſhall control us? *All things are lawful for us*, and it is a manly Virtue to uſe our Liberty, were ſome of their received Sayings, or perverted Aphoriſms of Wiſdom.

Wherefore in the Text, St. *Paul* conſiders ſtrictly

ſtrictly this their deceitful and pernicious Reaſoning; and to clear his way, allows the general Propoſition, *All things are lawful for me*, but ſhows the abſurdity of their conſtruction of it, and practice upon it in two particulars.

Firſt, Suppoſe it be granted that Man is a voluntary Agent, Maſter of himſelf and of all Creatures, yet this Liberty of human Nature muſt not be underſtood of a belluine power of doing what we *liſt*, but only of a freedom from the Force and Impulſe of external Cauſes. Our Liberty is indeed our greateſt Glory, yet altogether ſubject to Reaſon and Diſcretion. So that amongſt indifferent things, as going to Law, about which we are ſimply free, if Reaſon, Prudence, or the Honor of the Goſpel incline to the one part, there we are obliged and bound. *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient.*

Again, the *Apoſtle* repeats their Argument, *All things are lawful for me*, which in the learned

ed Authors, is the moſt Elegant Form of Replication, and ſhows that they ſo ignorantly miſtake their own Principle, that their Practices upon it are a direct Contradiction to it.

Your excuſe for Luxury and Contention is your Liberty, but are ye not aſhamed by an appearance of Liberty, to be ſo eaſily trepann'd and deluded into real Slavery? Are ye ſuch Children to be caught by a word, and decoyed ſo fooliſhly into Nets and Snares? Do ye not know that the Liberty of Man is ſuch an Authority over his Will and Actions, that he may *always be indifferent* to things indifferent; that it is a power of conſidering every thing in its proper place, and one thing with Reſpect to another; of gratifying every Appetite and Faculty, without the prejudice or deſtruction of any, of believing, loving and deſiring according to the weight and nature of the thing, and the deciſion of right Reaſon.

But you, becauſe it is ſimply lawful to go to

Law, will therefore indulge intemperate heats, and ſuffer your ſelves to be ſo overcome of Paſſion, that the ſtrongeſt Reaſons, no not the Credit of Religion it ſelf are ſufficient to divert you; and becauſe no ſorts of meat are forbidden, common or unclean, you will therefore *inſlave* your ſelves to the Appetites of the Belly. So fooliſh are you, that in thoſe very actions wherein you think you aſſert your Liberty, you really deſtroy it; you ſacrifice your Reaſon to thoſe Rebellious Tyrannous Deſires which, of right, are *ſubject*, and might have been kept in due Obedience. *All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.* As if he had ſaid, If you would preſerve your Liberty, you muſt preſerve the Authority of your Underſtanding; and entirely ſubmit your Opinions, Appetites, and Actions thereunto. Since you are endowed with ſuch a Principle, you muſt reſolve that all things ſhall be indifferent to you, till they have paſſed the ſcrutiny of your Judgment,

that

that your Will and Affections, ſhall always wait the Reſolution of your Reaſon.

Thus having given you a ſhort Account of the occaſion of the Words, it is not neceſſary to inſiſt any farther upon their particular reſpect and application to the Caſe of the *Corinthians*, but I ſhall conſider them, independent of the Text, as a noble Reſolution of St. *Paul*, or as an univerſal Rule of Wiſdom to all Men, in the Government of their Lives, *I will not be brought, &c.*

The Terms of the Problem are eaſily underſtood, and require but little Explication. Πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν *I have a power in all things*, of Judging, Chuſing and Acting according to right Reaſon.

Propoſitions of Truth, Objects of Deſire, and Methods of Practice are infinite and innumerable, and about theſe the Reaſon and Judgment of Man is exerciſed; and he has ſuch an abſolute power over his own Opinion and Practice, that he is not determined by a-

ny Fate, Neceſſity, or irreſiſtible Cauſe without himſelf, but by certain innate Principles, rational Powers, and the Divine Aſſiſtance, he is enabled to judge of Truth and Goodneſs, and only ſo far obliged to chuſe and act as ſhall appear conducive to his Happineſs, or agreeable to his Reaſon.

And having thus explained the Principle, the Senſe of the *Apoſtles* Reſolution or practical Comment thereupon is evident, *I will not be brought under the power of any thing*; I will ſo uſe this Liberty of Judging and Chuſing for my ſelf, that my Opinion, Will and Actions ſhall always remain, as they naturally are, the ſervants of my Underſtanding. I will not be deluded by falſe Appearances to believe Abſurdities, to love what is hateful or do what is evil. The words being thus explained may be reſolved into this eaſy Propoſition, *viz. That to preſerve the Authority of our Reaſon and the Liberty of our Will, from the Uſurpations of Prejudice, ſenſual Appetites and Paſſions, is the Wiſdom and Felicity*

licity of a Man. I will not be brought under the power of any thing.

The Text may ſeem at the firſt view to countenance Republican Principles and Opinions, but we ſhall find, upon a more exact inſpection, that it was never deſign'd by the *Apoſtle*, to ſerve the Intereſt of Faction or Sedition, to diſſolve or looſen Government, or ſubject the Laws of Princes to the Reaſon and Judgment of the People. This is ſo perverſe, ſo malicious an Explication of the Words, that thoſe who make it, cannot themſelves believe it, becauſe it is ſo direct a Contradiction to thoſe poſitive Declarations and expreſs Precepts of exacteſt Loyalty, which we find in St. *Pauls Epiſtles.*

And I humbly hope *ill ſounding Words* will not offend, when the deſign of uſing them, is to direct them to their proper places, to right Objects, and deliver them from thoſe groſs Abuſes which have been ſuper-induc'd upon them.

It is true, for fear of Miſconſtruction, I might have excepted the Laws of God and our Country as *Sacred Things*, about which, generally ſpeaking, we have no Deliberation, Liberty or Election, and therefore fall not under the Conſideration of the Propoſition, or the Rule of the *Apoſtle*, which only reſpect ſuch things as are *wholly* in our Power. And yet there would ſtill have been ſufficient Scope for the exerciſe of our Reaſon, Diſcretion and Choice.

For the Laws of Princes chiefly Reſpect the Publick Intereſt, or the Government of the external Actions of Men, as they are Members of the Commonwealth: but all Opinions of *indifferent* Nature, all ingenious Speculation, Philoſophy, Wiſdom, Moral Habits, inward Affections, together with almoſt the whole Oeconomy of Private Life, are left to the diſcretion of every man.

And moſt of the Laws of God are *general*, only the great Lines and Heads of Duties, but

but the application of Particulars, the Proportion of one thing to another, the Relation, Affections, and Circumſtances of Duties are left to the deciſion of Human Reaſon.

This I might have done, but it is wholly needleſs to make ſuch Limitation or Exception, for the Propoſition is univerſally true, *viz. That to preſerve the Authority of our Reaſon, and the Liberty of our Will, from the Uſurpations of Prejudice, ſenſual Appetites and Paſſions, is the Wiſdom and Felicity of a Man.* Indeed, one of the very *firſt*, and moſt obvious Principles of Right Reaſon is, the moſt intire Reſignation of our ſelves to be govern'd by the Laws of God and our Country. And no Man that does not baſely deſert his Reaſon, and *depart* from this incomparable Rule of the *Apoſtle*, can ever wilfully Sin againſt God, or Rebel againſt his Prince.

This premiſed, I ſhall now proceed to conſider the truth of the Propoſition with Reſpect

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to things *Intellectual, Moral, Civil* and *Religious*, and ſhow that in all theſe (which comprehend whatſoever the Judgment of Man is converſant about) *to preſerve the Authority of our Reaſon, and the Liberty of our Will, from the Uſurpation of Prejudice, and the Briberies of Intereſt, ſenſual Appetites and Paſſions, is the Wiſdom and Felicity of a Man.*

And firſt, *With Reſpect to things intellectual, or in the Study of uſeful Knowledge, and the Government of our Opinon.*

Every perfect Man is born with inherent Topicks of right Reaſon, with a ſufficient Syſtem of natural Logick; his Mind is impreſs'd with Standing Principles, and eternal Verities to direct him in the ſearch of Truth, and furniſhed with rational Powers of comparing one thing with another, of judging Effects by Cauſes, and drawing innumerable and certain Inferences from thoſe undoubted Premiſes.

This then is the Liberty and Glory of Human

man Nature, that it is indifferent and free to every *doubtful Opinion* and *diſputable* Propoſition, that thoſe who have ſufficient opportunity of improving their Faculties, are enabled to judge for themſelves, and not obliged to aſſent without ſufficient Reaſon; that there is no *force* upon their Minds from within or without themſelves; but as the ſenſitive Faculties do freely judge of Sweet and Bitter, or the qualities of their proper Objects by the Teſt of *Senſe*, ſo the Rational conclude of *True* and *Falſe*, of *Good* and *Evil*, by ſuch demonſtrations as the Nature of the thing requires.

It is therefore the higheſt point of Wiſdom in the world, to defend this Liberty of Reaſoning, this Jewel of ineſtimable Value, from the Uſurpations of Prejudice and Paſſion; to ſuſpend our Aſſent till we ſhall be ſufficiently convinced; to ſearch for Truth impartially, to purſue it greedily, to love it for it ſelf, and embrace it readily whereſoever we find it: So ſhall we preſerve the Beauty of our Nature,

and the perfection of our Being. So ſhall we diſcharge our Truſt, and preſerve that Authority in our little world which God has inveſted us withal.

Not like the Sceptic who reſolves to ſuſpend his Judgment, and remain *indifferent* howſoever *clear* and full the Evidence may be; this is to prevent the diſeaſes of the Eyes by pulling them out. It is true, he cannot be deceived or impoſed upon by *particular* Propoſitions, but the thing it ſelf, or the reſolution of believing nothing, is the greateſt Deluſion and *Impoſition* of the Mind that can be; for the Mind is greedy of Knowledge, our Faculties are diſpoſed to ſeek it, and the Divine Nature, and all the appearances in the world are intended for our Speculation; and the Soul enjoys a Truth with the greateſt delight imaginable: ſo that whilſt the Sceptic pretends to *ſecure*, he really *deſtroys* the *Liberty* of his Mind, he debars it by violence and force from the kind enjoyment of its proper Objects.

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But Firm, Well-grounded, Rational Aſſent proceeding from a cautious ſearch, from an impartial preparation to believe upon ſufficient Evidence, upon univerſal Principles, regular Deductions, and credible Teſtimony, is the *true* and *proper* Liberty of human Nature, the higheſt Command and Authority over ones ſelf.

Theſe are the Men who alone are accompliſhed for the Study of Knowledge, who ſee with their own Eyes, underſtand by their own Judgment, diſcover Truth, improve Learning, and are highly uſeful in the Commonwealth.

But the Sceptick is ignorant and uſeleſs. And a Man, on the other hand, of a *paſſive* Spirit, fond of every Opinion, tenacious of his firſt Impreſſions, of antient Errors, of popular Opinions: judging by Intereſt, Prejudice, Affection, Senſe, or any thing but *impartial Reaſon*, is a very ſlave to innumerable, inconſtant, giddy Maſters; to every hypocriti-

cal designing Countenance, to every conceited Emperick, bold Assertor, false Historian, uncertain Proverb, and to all who by *cunning Arts and Devices go about to deceive.* Oh homines ad servitutem nati! *as* Seneca *speaks upon the like occasion, Oh Men! destin'd, cut out for Slaves, how monstrous is it that you should desire to have all things free, your Bodies, your Goods, your Members, and not your Spirit, which yet alone is born to Liberty?* It is therefore a wise and happy Rule, *I will not be brought under the Power of any thing in Speculation or the search of Truth.*

And as in Speculation, so secondly *in the Government of our Life and Actions, to preserve the Authority of our Reason and the Liberty of our Will, from the Usurpations of Prejudice, sensual Appetites and Passions, is the Wisdom and Felicity of a Man: I will not be brought under the power of any thing in Matters Moral.*

The just and true design of Speculation or the study of Truth and Falshood is, that we may

may the better be enabled to judge of Good and Evil. For the ultimate End or higheſt Perfection of Man is a ſteddy, conſtant courſe of laudable Actions, ſuch a rational procedure as ſhall Improve our Faculties, advance our Intereſt and ſatisfie the *true* Diſpoſitions aud Inclinations of our Nature. To this are all the Faculties of the Soul intended to adminiſter, and into this they finally reſolve; we diſcourſe, compare, judge and determine for this end that we may *act* according to right Reaſon.

All the Kinds of Being in the world, excepting Man, are *ſimple* and *intire*. The Angels *now*, are Pure and Perfect in their Will and Appetites, immoveably determined to that which is good, they act *freely* and from a *vital Principle*, but yet their Knowledge is ſo diſtinct and clear, that it is ſuppoſed impoſſible they ſhould direct their choice amiſs: Beaſts are altogether ſenſual, moved by certain inſtincts, and impreſſions, which direct them to the proper

per ſatisfactions of their ſeveral deſires. But the nature of Man is *mixt*, he partakes of the Perfections, Quality and Inclinations of all other Kinds of Being whatſoever. He is ſo far Divine and Spiritual, as he moves and acts from himſelf freely, and for the ſake of ends, and is endowed with Principles of Goodneſs, Wiſdom, Knowledge and Reflection. And ſo far alſo ſenſitive and animal, as his Mind is lodg'd in an earthly Body, endowed with Organs of the *quickeſt Senſe*, and ſent into a world that is furniſhed with all the ſatisfactions of the animal Life.

And tho this condition, neither purely ſpiritual, nor purely animal be imperfect, yet it is the moſt honourable that can be on earth; it is the nobleſt nature that could be framed with an earthly body. For tho the inferior Powers, the ſenſitive Appetites are very quick, and the ſame in us as Brutes; yet every Man is *Maſter of himſelf*, capable of underſtanding his *whole* Capacity, of preſerving the Beauty, Har-

Harmony and Order of his frame; of watching the motions of his Will and Affections: of ſubduing the Predominancy of irregular deſires, and directing them to their proper Objects: finally, *by the Grace of God*, of preſerving his peculiar Form Intire and Perfect.

This is that Liberty, that Authority of Man over his Deſires and Actions. His province indeed is very difficult, *viz.* to improve and ſatisfie the ſeveral and *contrary* Diſpoſitions of his nature to keep his Paſſions equal, and his ſenſitive Appetites in their proper inferior place and order: to prevent Diſeaſes and Sickneſs, Jars and Claſhing in ſo fine and curious a Compoſition, but his natural Power, *aſſiſted by the Grace of God*, is every way proportionable. He is able to judge, by inward Impreſſions, by his natural Neceſſities, and by the Divine Revelation, what is fit and reaſonable to do or to forbear, and to act accordingly.

It is not therefore a brutiſh Licentiouſneſs or

Liberty

Liberty of doing what we *pleaſe*, of gratifying the *preſent* Appetite, of proceeding without the conſideration of the effects and conſequence of Actions: ſuch a Liberty is utterly incompetent, indeed a contradiction to rational Nature. For the eſſential difference of Man is Conſciouſneſs, or the Knowledge of himſelf with a power of directing his Actions according to Reaſon, that is, with reſpect to his real Intereſt, eſtimated and meaſured by the Capacities of his Nature. That therefore cannot be challenged as a Right, or deſired as a Priviledge which directly *deſtroys* our very *Species*.

Even God himſelf, who certainly enjoys the moſt perfect Freedom as well as all other Excellencies, has yet no Liberty to *Evil*. There is a rule or manner of operation implyed in the Divine Nature; all his Attributes are exerciſed with reſpect and ſafety to each other; there is an Agreement or Harmony in the Divine Perfections which is juſtly ſtyled the Eternal Immuta-

Immutable Law of God. Thus alſo the Liberty of Man in the management of *his* Life, is not a Liberty of living *looſly*, without all Reſpects, Bounds and Laws: but of Chuſing, Loving and Acting with relation to his *Real* Intereſt, to the true Diſpoſitions, Inclinations and Capacities of his Nature. And Actions thus proceeding are the only *genuine*, *free* and *eaſy* Actions of our Lives.

And notwithſtanding theſe ſeeming Limitations, this is the moſt honorable, the moſt *perfect* ſtate of Ingenuity and Liberty that can be imagined. For it is the liberty of God himſelf. It is this that gives us the Denomination of rational Agents. It is this that enables us to live a happy Life, to improve, indulge and gratify, as well our ſenſitive as intellectual Powers. For he only who is *looſe* from ſenſual Pleaſures *truly* enjoys them. For as *Seneca* well obſerves, *they that are under the power of bodily Pleaſures, cannot be ſaid to have pleaſure, but pleaſure has them, we cannot be ſaid to poſſeſs or enjoy what is not under our Command.*

This then is the Glory, the nobleſt Prerogative of Human Nature; and therefore to *preſerve the Authority of our Reaſon, from the Uſurpations of ſenſual Appetites and Paſſions, muſt ſurely be the Wiſdom and Felicity of a Man. For where* the Will is directed by due conſideration, by a well weighed Judgment, there is Health, Eaſe and Satisfaction. Our Lives will be conformable to God, our Knowledge will be clearer and more copious, our Appetites indifferent and obſequious, our Affections equal, proportion'd to the value of the Object, our Paſſions calm and regular. *Seneca* ſays of ſuch a Man that he is *Immoveable as God, compell'd of nothing, attempting nothing in vain, never diſappointed, always ſafe, unhurt and free.*

It is this that is true Nobility, true Generoſity of Soul, and Greatneſs of Mind; theſe are the moſt perfect of Men, and therefore the moſt beautiful and honor'd in the ſight of all: their Minds are free, their Faculties improved, their Judgment ready, apt for Council, Truſt, Managery, without Hypocriſy, Deſign or pri-

vate

vate Intereſt. And thoſe things which flow from a Mans ſelf are his real Honor.

But as for thoſe who break the Order of this inward Government, who chuſe and purſue according to the firſt appearance, and love without deliberation; who by reaſon of their conſtant Converſation with ſenſual Objects, look no farther, but underſtand, eſteem Judge and love with Reſpect to theſe alone; they are under a force and coaction of Soul: their natural power over their Deſires and Actions to direct them according to Reaſon and Intereſt, is uſurped upon by thoſe rebellious Paſſions which of right are *ſubject* and ought to wait the Reſolution of deliberate Judgment.

And when once this Order is broken, what tumult, what conteſt muſt it neceſſarily raiſe in the Minds of Men? How inſatiable are inordinate Deſires, how inconſiſtent, and yet how importunate to be gratified? Whilſt Ambition prompts to that which Envy diſallows, Pride commands what Covetouſneſs forbids.

Urget enim mentem Dominus non lenis, & acres
Subjectat laſſo ſtimulos.

Or as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *They are holden priſoners of Satan at his Will*, 2 *Tim.* 2 26.

And as in Speculation, and in the general inſtitution of Life: So thirdly, in the particular management of ones ſelf, as a Member of Society. *To preſerve the Authority of our Reaſon, from the impoſitions of falſe Opinion, Prejudice and Paſſion, is the Wiſdom and Felicity of a Man. I will not be brought under the power of any thing in matters Civil.*

The Authority of Princes cannot be more highly aſſerted, nor the Obedience of Subjects more ſtrictly enjoyned ~~by~~ than by St. *Paul* in many paſſages of his *Epiſtles*. And yet in my Text the ſame St *Paul* may ſeem a great Bigot of *Liberty*, and upon the queſtion peremptorily reſolve, that *He would not be brought under the power of any*, the word is τινος and may be interpreted of *Perſons* as well as things.

Wherefore ſince a contradiction in the *Apoſtle* is abhorrent to conceive, we may be ſure there is a fair Accommodation, and *intire Obedience* according to the firm injunction of the *Apoſtle*, may

may be reconciled, and proper *Liberty* of a man, with the juſt, aſſerted in the Text.

And indeed, as hath been already noted, and cannot be too well conſidered, the Liberty of Man in any matter whatſoever, is not an exorbitant power of acting as he pleaſes, but of doing what is moſt rational in its nature and conducive to his happineſs. And this very notion of Liberty were it throughly imbibed, would be a ſufficient Antidote againſt the Deluſions of Hypocrites and the Impoſitions of the Seditious.

Government is the defence and ſafety of the weak, the foundation of Property the encouragement of Civility, Arts, Learning and Religion. Without this the Human Nature would be the moſt ſavage in the world; Reaſon would degenerate into Craft and Malice, and be but an addition of Strength to vex, moleſt and prey upon one another. Wherefore one of the firſt and moſt obvious reſolutions of Reaſon, is, that we are *ſubject naturally* and of *right*.

And amongſt the many Kingdoms and Societies of the world, common Senſe will teach us

to

to account our ſelves the undoubted Subjects of that particular Polity in which we are *Born*, and under whoſe Protection and Influence we live.

And becauſe the very *Form* and *Eſſence* as well as the *Beauty* and *Strength* of any *Government*, is *final determination or abſolute Authority*, therefore Reaſon peremptorily commands the moſt cheerful Obſervation of whatſoever Laws concerning any matters that are not plainly determined by the *Laws* of *God*, to whom we are primarily obliged. Wherefore then, the moſt patient reſignation of our ſelves, our *private Will* and *Intereſt* to the *Will* and *Authority* of the *Government* we live under, is therefore our *trueſt Liberty* becauſe it is the evident *Reſolution* of *Right Reaſon*.

For any *Government* by how much the more intire, poſitive and abſolute it is, by ſo much the better it is enabled to *ſupport* it ſelf. It is fitted for *defence*, ſecret in *Councils*, in deliberation *Wiſe and Bold*, without *Hypocriſie* or *Fear*, in execution *Potent*, where the *Intereſt* is but one, the ſubjects will be as eaſy as they are ſecure, and the Neighbors juſt and awful.

But

But all *Reſervations* of *poſitive* or *real Power* in the *People*, all Exemptions in the *Modes* or *external Celebrations* of *Religion*, or in any other indifferent matter, from the *Juriſdiction* of the *Government*, are pernicious to Societies; they nouriſh a continual *Ferment*, ſupport and continue divers *Intereſts*, ingender *Emulation*, *Stirs*, *Heats*, *Rebellion*, and *Civil Wars*, intoxicate the common *People*, and fill their Minds with *Curioſity*, *Conceit* and *Pride*; furniſh *Envy* and *Ambition*, *Faction* and *Diſcontent* with plauſible diſguiſes and colors for their *Malice* and *Iniquity*. In a word, they clog and prejudice the *Government*, but it is impoſſible in the nature of the thing, that they ſhould *ſecure* or *ſerve* the *Real Intereſt* of any people in the world.

For the *Authority* of the people is indeed a meer *Chymera*, a word of *Art* to conciliate poor deluded Slaves to the oppreſſions, and tyrannies of the *Senate*, and in *Fact* and *Practice*, the Subjects of Commonwealths are as ſeverely governed as thoſe of any Monarchy we know. Wherefore then, the *true Liberty of Man in his*

politic

politic Capacity, as in all things elſe, is to act as *Reaſon*, that is, the *Intereſt* of human Nature, or the neceſſities of *Society* require, namely with the moſt obſequious *Submiſſion*: To lay aſide the airy Dream of *original imaginary Power* in *him* (that curſed Spring of Miſchief and Confuſion!) to conſider his *Incompetency*, to judge his *Governors*, or their proceedings, to be always apt to believe the beſt, and ready to aſſert the *Authority* (which is the Cement) of the eſtabliſht *Government*, with *Vigor* and hearty *Zeal*, in his place and ſtation.

And this is a *Notion* as eaſy to be underſtood as it is *juſt*, *ſecure* and *ſafe* in practice. But to take the Liberty of the Subject for any *Latent*, *Direct* or *Poſitive Authority* reſiding in them is fooliſh to *Abſurdity*, becauſe it deſtroys the very Reaſon, or Principle upon which the *Opinion* it ſelf is founded, namely, *the ſafety of the People.* For if we could ſuppoſe, what can never be made to appear by any Example, a people perfectly free, and at their own diſpoſe that which never was by general content, did appoint

appoint and constitute a *Prince*, or *Governors*, enduing him or them with such degrees of *Power* as they thought fit, reserving to themselves the Sovereignty; such a *Government*, I say, would prove in a little time, impracticable and vain.

For where *all* have Authority, *none* have. Through corruption of human Nature, the Generality of Men *hate* their Superiors; had they therefore any share in the Government, or any *real power*, it would beget such an haughty opinion of themselves, raise such extravagant Passions, as must necessarily put the Government into frequent danger of Dissolution.

It is therefore the Wisdom and Felicity of a man, to preserve the Authority of his Reason, from the Impositions of popular opinions, prejudice and passion in these things. To consider his *Station*, and never suffer the plausible *Pretences* of designing *Malecontents* to debauch his *reason*, or shock his *Loyalty*: so shall he contribute to the preservation of the *Government*, and in that to his own happiness, to the free enjoyment of the liberty of his *mind* and *will* in all those other things wherein it may be justly exercised.

How agreeable would this *Diſpoſition* in the *People* to their *Prince* and to *one another*? what a *Confidence* would it raiſe? what *delight*, what free and cheerful *Intercourſe*? how would all *Suſpicion* and *Hypocriſy*, *Fears*, *Jealouſies* and odious *Characters* be baniſht human Converſation?

And it is this, this *Humility* and *Modeſty* in the Subject, that is the beſt ſecurity in the world of *real Priviledges*, of *public Intereſt*, and *ſteddy Government*. There is in Man ſuch a natural *Condeſcenſion*, ſuch *Civility*, ſuch ſenſe of *Love* and *Duty* obſerved, that it is an affront to the Ingenuity of *Human Nature* to ſuppoſe a *Prince* ſhould be *ſevere* upon a *willing* and *obedient people*.

But thoſe who miſtake the *Liberty* of the Subject for ſovereign *Power*, as the *Republican*, or for a freedom from all *Coertion*, *Laws* and *Government*, as the *Enthuſiaſt*, or for a Liberty of capricious Cenſure, of controlling *Princes*, of reducing them to *Reaſon by* force, of improving and practiſing upon *Fears* and *Poſſibilities*, as the *factious Monarchiſt*, theſe, I ſay, whilſt they would ſeem ſo great Aſſerters of their *Liberty*, are, in truth,

as

as very Slaves as any in the world. They are always buſied with mighty *Earneſtneſs*, about ſuch matters as are above their *Comprehenſion*, but there cannot be a greater miſery than hot and fiery *Spirits* acting upon *falſe Appearances*, upon crude and indiſtinct *Notions* and *Apprehenſions* of things. How is ſuch a perſon galled and agitated from himſelf, from the confuſion of his *own Mind?* and how fitly is *he* prepared for every *cunning Patriot* and *deſigning Malecontent* to *act* upon? They are bewitched with the *word Liberty* as with a *Charm*, live in *perpetual paſſion*, in ignorant and imprudent *Zeal*, they govern themſelves by *inconſtant Principles*, are diſtracted by multiplicity of new *Deſigns*, neglect their *Buſineſs*, deſtroy their *Virtue*, expoſe their *Fortunes*, and centre often in an *ignominious Death*. And thus the Propoſition is undoubtedly true in our Relation to the *Government*: *that to preſerve, &c. I will not be brought under the power of any thing in Matters Civil.*

4. The time will not permit me to illuſtrate the *Apoſtles Rule* as I propoſed in the laſt place,

with *Relation* to *Religion*, or in Matters *Divine* and *Spiritual*.

And here I intended to ſhow that *Man* by *natural inſtinct* found himſelf oblig'd to *worſhip God*.

That he is endued with ſufficient *Abilities* if he carefully employ them, and have opportunity of improving them, to judge of ſuch a *demeanor* or *habit* of life, as is likely to be accepted of him.

That every man whoſe *Education* and *Opportunities* will permit him, is obliged to *aſſert* and *exerciſe* this *Liberty of proving all things, that at length, when he has found the beſt, he may hold it faſt*, 1 *Theſ.* 5. 21. 1 *Joh.* 4. 1. of determining his *Faith* and *Practice* according as his *Reaſon*, after the moſt *diligent ſearch* and *faithful uſe* of all the means of *Knowledge*, ſhall direct him

That *Reaſon* will prompt him, to conſult the *Law of Nature, the common Senſe of man-kind, the divine Revelation, the conſent of the univerſal Church, the Authority of the Church he lives in.*

That whoſoever judges of *true Religion* by theſe rules, (which are the *Principles in the ſtudy of Religion*, wherein alone the Mind can reſt,

reſt, and ſatisfie it ſelf) *acts* moſt rationally, and therefore moſt freely. That the difficulties in the *ſtudy of Religion* are ſuch, that true Ingenuity of mind will diſpoſe, and oblige to a modeſt acquieſcence in the *definition of the Church.*

That therefore *Chriſtian Liberty* is not a liberty of ſerving God, according to the ſuggeſtions of private fancy without any farther Reſpect, that this is the unhappy fountain of moſt of the *Hereſies*, *Schiſms*, wild and extravagant *Opinions* which infeſt and vex the Church.

That therefore alſo, it is not an exemption from *Laws Eccleſiaſtical*, or reſtraints in the outward Celebration of Religion, upon ſuch pains as the Church and State ſhall find neceſſary; that if the *Theory* and *Practice* of Religion were at the *Will* and *Choice* of every Subject, it would be impoſſible for the Prince to *preſerve* his people in *Peace* and *Godlineſs.*

That therefore, laſtly, it is not an indifference to all *Religion*; but a *readineſs* of *mind* to embrace whatſoever, either from the nature of the thing, or from the authority with which it comes atteſted,

teſted, ſhall appear to be True or Good.

That thus to *ſtudy*, and to *inform* our ſelves, according to our *opportunities*, in the *nature* and *truth* of Religion, with due *ſubmiſſion* to Authority, gives a man a *ſteddy Confidence* and *Security* in his Mind, a *ſober judgment*, aſſurance in his Practice. He knows how to *behave* himſelf under all the different *modes* and *faſhions* of Religious *Worſhip*, he cannot eaſily be *drawn* into *Superſtition* and *Idolatry* on the one hand, nor into *Schiſm*, by *Scrupuloſity* or *Ignorance* on the other. He eaſily diſtinguiſhes *Graviora Legis* from the *Condientia virtutis*, as *Origen* ſtyles them; finally, the Religion of ſuch a man is his *own*, his deliberate *act*, *God* is his *Choice*, and will therefore be his *Reward*.

But whoſoever takes the *Meaſures* of his Religion from the conſtitution of *his body*, from vulgar opinions of *Sanctity*, from the *ſenſe* of ſuch *particular Perſons* as he ſhall *happen* to *eſteem*, or from any other *Principle* than that of his *own Reaſon* directed *ſoberly* and with all *ſubmiſſion* and *deference* to the *Church univerſal*, and that in particular

ticular whereof *he* is a *Member* (which is highly and ſtrictly rational) is under the *greateſt ſlavery* that it is poſſible to fall into. For if he be a man of any *underſtanding*, he will always be *perplexed* in his Mind, and diffident in *himſelf*, always *uncertain*, and therefore always liable to be *troubled* and *confounded*, becauſe the Principles upon which he *proceeds*, *viz. bodily temper*, *vulgar opinion*, *the ſenſe of particular Perſons*, and the like, are mutable and apt to vary every day.

And thus, as briefly as I could, I have illuſtrated the *Apoſtles rule*, or the *Wiſdom of preſerving the authority of our Reaſon and the Liberty of our Will from the uſurpations of Prejudice, ſenſual Appetites, and Paſſions. I will not be brought under the power of any thing.*

What therefore now remains, but that we reſolve *to govern* our Opinions and Practice by this Wiſe and Noble Rule of that *Apoſtle*?

How can we conceive a *man* more *perfect* than one whoſe *underſtanding* is free, fitted to judge; and always ready to receive the *Impreſſions* of *Truth* and *Goodneſs*: whoſe Principles are *Eternal*,

nal, his Opinion *deliberate*, in Morals *wiſe* and *upright*, in his Converſation *ſteddy*, *eaſy and indifferent*, whoſe Religion is *firm*, and his Loyalty *immoveable*?

Others may have the *Shape*, theſe only have the *Form*, theſe only live the life of Men. *Pulcherrimum victoriæ genus eſt ſeipſum vincere.* It is the moſt *glorious* of *Victories*, the higheſt Attainment thus to command our ſelves.

External Acquiſitions may give us power and opportunities of *licentious living*, but *perfect freedom* is within our ſelves, when Prejudice and Paſſion, Pride and Ambition, Envy and Avarice, and all the Legion of contracted Prejudices and Immoveable Habits ſhall be *ſubdued*; when the *Son* of *God* by the Illuminations of his Spirit, and the Operations of his Grace ſhall make us free, *then ſhall we be free indeed* (2 *Cor.* 3. 17.) To whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be aſcribed all Honor, Praiſe and Obedience now and for ever. *Amen.*

FINIS.